

**Written Testimony of Christian Sorensen, Senior Fellow with the Eisenhower Media Network**

**House Committee on Finance**

**Regarding House Bill No. 6026 – AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCE – DIVESTMENT OF STATE PENSION FUNDS FROM MILITARY CONTRACTORS**

**11 March 2021**

Good day, Chairman Abney and members of the House. I wrote the book *Understanding the War Industry*, and I am currently a Senior Fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network, which is an organization of independent expert former military & intelligence officials. It is my honor to write to you.

The military-industrial-congressional complex is an insulated authority consisting of the U.S. military establishment, headquartered in the Pentagon; the war industry, the corporations that market and sell goods and services to the military and allied governments; and Capitol Hill, the elected representatives who fund the military and pass legislation abetting the permanent warfare state.

The war industry drives the wars. The war industry utilizes a five-step strategy to capture government:

1. recruit retired generals and admirals into war corporations, leveraging their knowledge for profit;
2. place ex-industry officials in the Pentagon's leadership;
3. finance congressional campaigns;
4. lobby Congress creatively;
5. and fund think tanks & media, creating a pro-war narrative.

With the federal government captured by corporate interest, it is our task at the local level to take the initiative to care for the public and end the wars. House Bill 6026 will help us create a healthy society.

We owe it to our fellow humans.

- At least 800,000 people [have died](#) over the past 20 years as a direct result of our wars, as tallied by Brown University's Costs of War Project. Siege, malnutrition, damaged infrastructure, and poisoned environments amount to hundreds of thousands *more* civilian deaths.
- Black and brown people overseas are the primary victim of our wars.
- Millions of people have been displaced in our warzones in recent years—not just in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in Syria, Libya, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Colombia, and on and on.

We owe it to the troops. These days, everybody says "thank you for your service," but few take the action necessary to end the wars that harm the troops.

- The troops largely join the military for economic reasons, according to data from the military recruiting commands. The troops—soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines—are then deployed, separated from their families.
- The wars harm the troops. They are maimed physically and mentally. Many are killed. Over 7,000 U.S. troops and over 8,000 U.S. mercenaries have died in Iraq and Afghanistan alone.
- The suicide rate among veterans is through the roof. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the [number](#) of veterans committing suicide has been roughly 20 veterans per day over the past 15 years. Trauma experienced during deployment drives them to despair.
- We can be proud of our troops' bravery *while we work hard* to end the wars that harm the troops. That entails stopping the corporate profiteering that fuels the wars.

The war industry will try to pull the "jobs" card. Don't fall for it.

- Consider Lockheed Martin, the world's biggest war corporation. A 2019 [report](#) from the Center for International Policy looked at the years 2012-18: Lockheed Martin cut 15,000 jobs from its workforce while it was *the top corporate recipient of tax dollars* (a peak of \$50.6 billion received in 2017). "In short, since 2012 the number of taxpayer dollars going to Lockheed has expanded by billions, the value of its

stock has nearly quadrupled, and its CEO's salary went up 32%, even as it cut 14% of its American work force. Yet Lockheed continues to use job creation, as well as its employees' present jobs to get yet more taxpayer money."

- A tax dollar spent on healthcare, sustainable energy, education, or infrastructure **creates more jobs** than a dollar spent on the military or the war industry. The Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at U-Mass Amherst documented this fact in a report released 25 May 2017.

Both Republicans and Democrats can get behind this proposed legislation, because it cares for the people.

Polls indicate that the public is tired of D.C.'s wars. The public wants to bring the troops home. Indeed, polls indicate that veterans are more likely than the general population to support full military withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan. All it takes is political initiative to reflect the will of the people in a democratic fashion.

Divesting state pension funds from the war industry helps to take the fuel out of the war industry's fire. Divesting state pension funds from the war industry respects the troops and cares for the public.

I appreciate the opportunity to write to this Committee, and thank you for your leadership on this issue.